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ABSTRACT

This handbook for teachers is the seventh and final volume in the series of Asian Project curriculum materials for the teaching of English as a second language to adults. The three basic components of the handbook--the phonological, the syntactical, and the cultural--are intended to provide teachers of Asian students with background information which will help them better understand the problems and needs of their students. The information included focuses on Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino students. A brief survey of the pronunciation problems of Samoan students appears in the appendix. Since Asian students are often found in classes containing many Spanish speakers, a Spanish component has been added. A bibliography concludes the handbook. (PP)

ED 095709

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ASIAN
PROJECT

# Bridging the Asian Language and Cultural Gap

# Handbook for Teachers

FLOD 6169

Volume Seven

ED 095709

# BRIDGING THE ASIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL GAP

## A Handbook for Teachers

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DIVISION OF CAREER AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## FOREWORD

"Bridging the Asian Language and Cultural Gap" was initiated as a curriculum-development and teacher-in-service project designed to help the non-English-speaking Asian adult meet his everyday language needs. Funded by the U. S. Office of Education as a special experimental demonstration project, it operates under the Adult Basic Education Program of the Division of Career and Continuing Education of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

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## DESIGN OF HANDBOOK

This Handbook for Teachers is designed to help bridge the language and cultural gap between teachers and their Asian students in classes of English as a Second Language for adults.

It is the seventh and final volume in the series of curriculum materials developed in the Los Angeles Unified School District under federal funding. The other volumes in the series, designed to help develop English communication skills in non-English-speaking Asian adults, are:

Beginning English for Adults, Volumes 1-4

Intermediate English for Adults, Volume 5

Pronunciation Lessons for Adults, Volume 6

The three basic components of this handbook--the phonological, the syntactical, and the cultural--are intended to provide teachers of Asian students with background information which will help them better understand the problems and needs of their students. Background notes on the lands and their people are included.

Information in the handbook focuses on students from China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, as these represent the largest Asian immigrant groups. A brief survey of the pronunciation problems of Samoan students appears in the Appendix. Because Asian students are often found in classes containing many Spanish speakers, a Spanish component has been added for the teacher's convenience.

This handbook is based upon staff research supported by input from both scholars and practitioner in the field. A comparative analysis of the Asian and Spanish languages with English was undertaken as part of our research,

in the belief that information derived therefrom could be helpful in predicting problem areas for the learners in both phonology and syntax.

No attempt has been made to establish a hierarcy of predicted difficulties. Rather, the findings of our study are presented as background information that could be helpful to the teachers in planning their lessons.

In the presentation of information for the cultural component, a selective approach has been taken. The items which appear include information on those areas of cultural interferences most requested by teachers, as well as those found to be most troublesome by the Asian students themselves.

ESL teachers are well aware that each student is an individual. While generalizations made about a cultural group can be helpful in predicting problems, one cannot expect each individual from that culture to fit the pattern described. Such stereotyping would lead to serious misunderstandings.

THE ASIAN PROJECT STAFF

May, 1974

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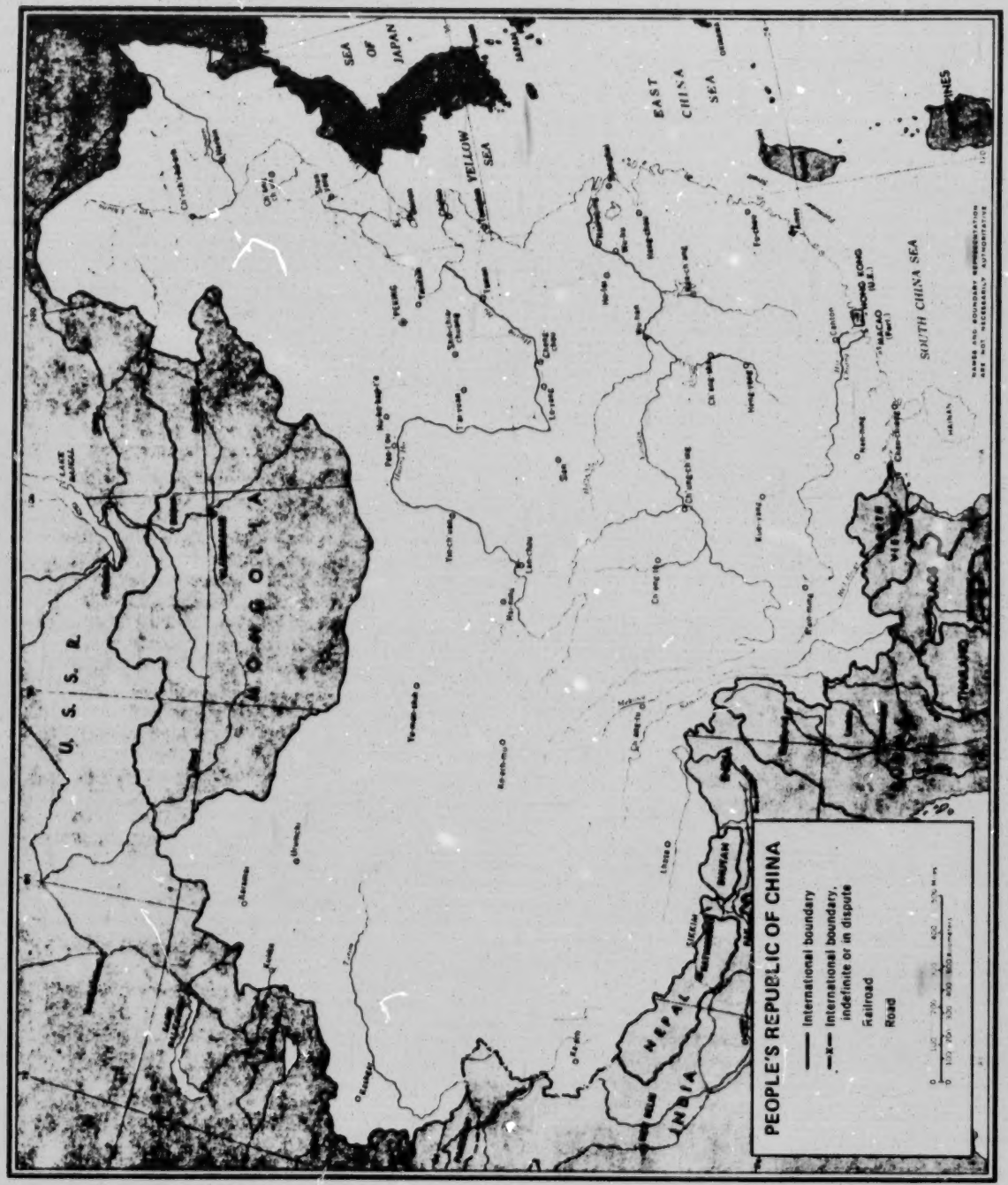

# INTRODUCTION

## Background Notes on the Lands and the People

### CHINA

The Chinese immigrants in the United States are principally from the southern province of Kwangtung. Many of these immigrants have not come directly from mainland China, particularly since the Chinese Revolution of 1949, but directly through one of the following places: Hong Kong or the Republic of China in Taiwan.

### PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The People's Republic of China (Mainland China) is located in eastern Asia. It is the third largest country in the world, smaller only than the U.S.S.R. and Canada. Although there are not recent population statistics available, the People's Republic of China is believed to have between 825 and 875 million people, making it the most populous country in the world.

About 94 percent of the total population are the Han Chinese, while several non-Chinese groups make up the remaining 6 percent (approximately fifty-one million). They include the Tibetans in the north and northeast, and the Uighurs and Muslims in the northwest.

The national language is based on the Peking dialect of Mandarin Chinese, and other principal dialects include Cantonese, Shanghai, Fukienese, and Hakka. The non-Chinese groups speak their own languages.

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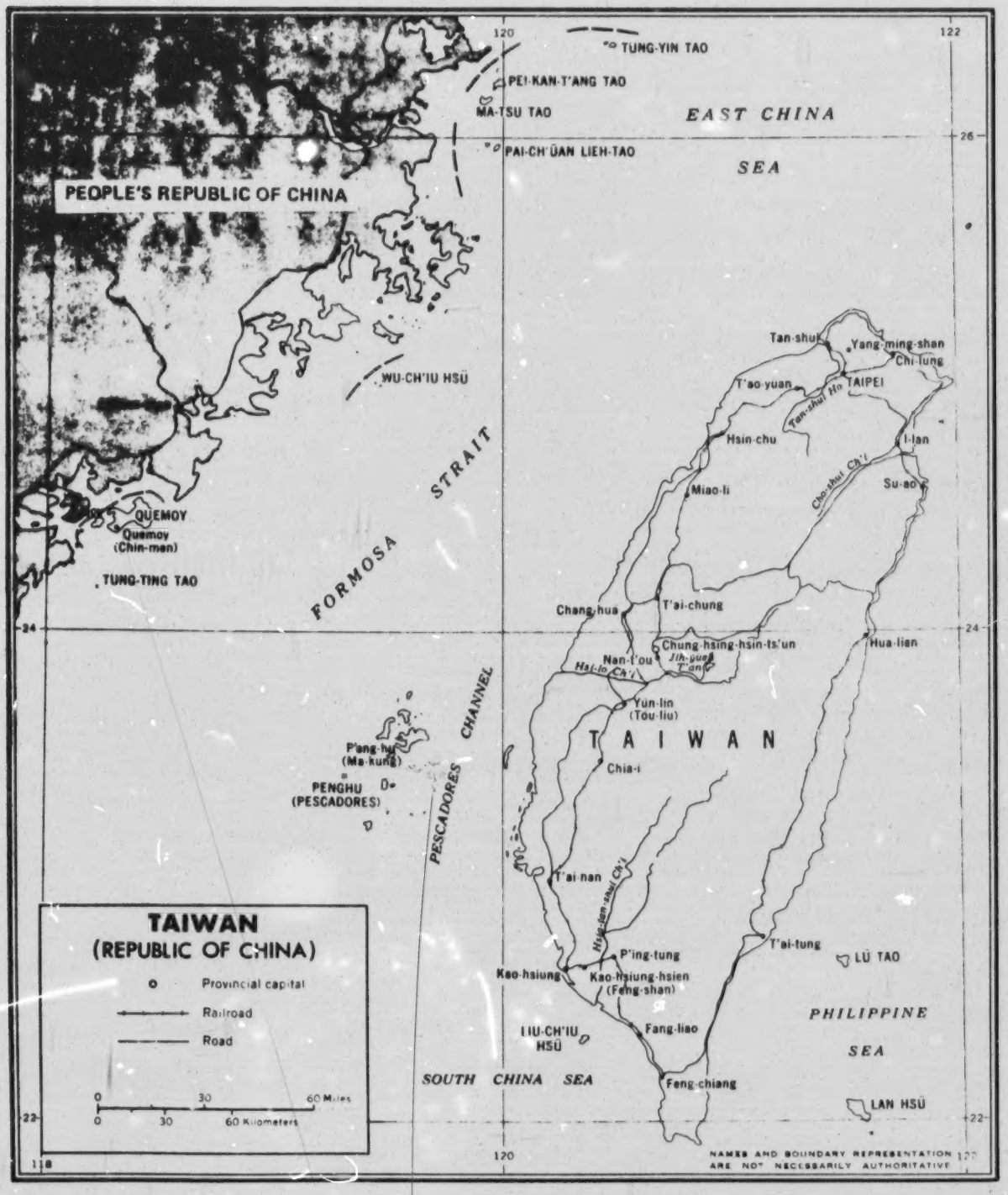
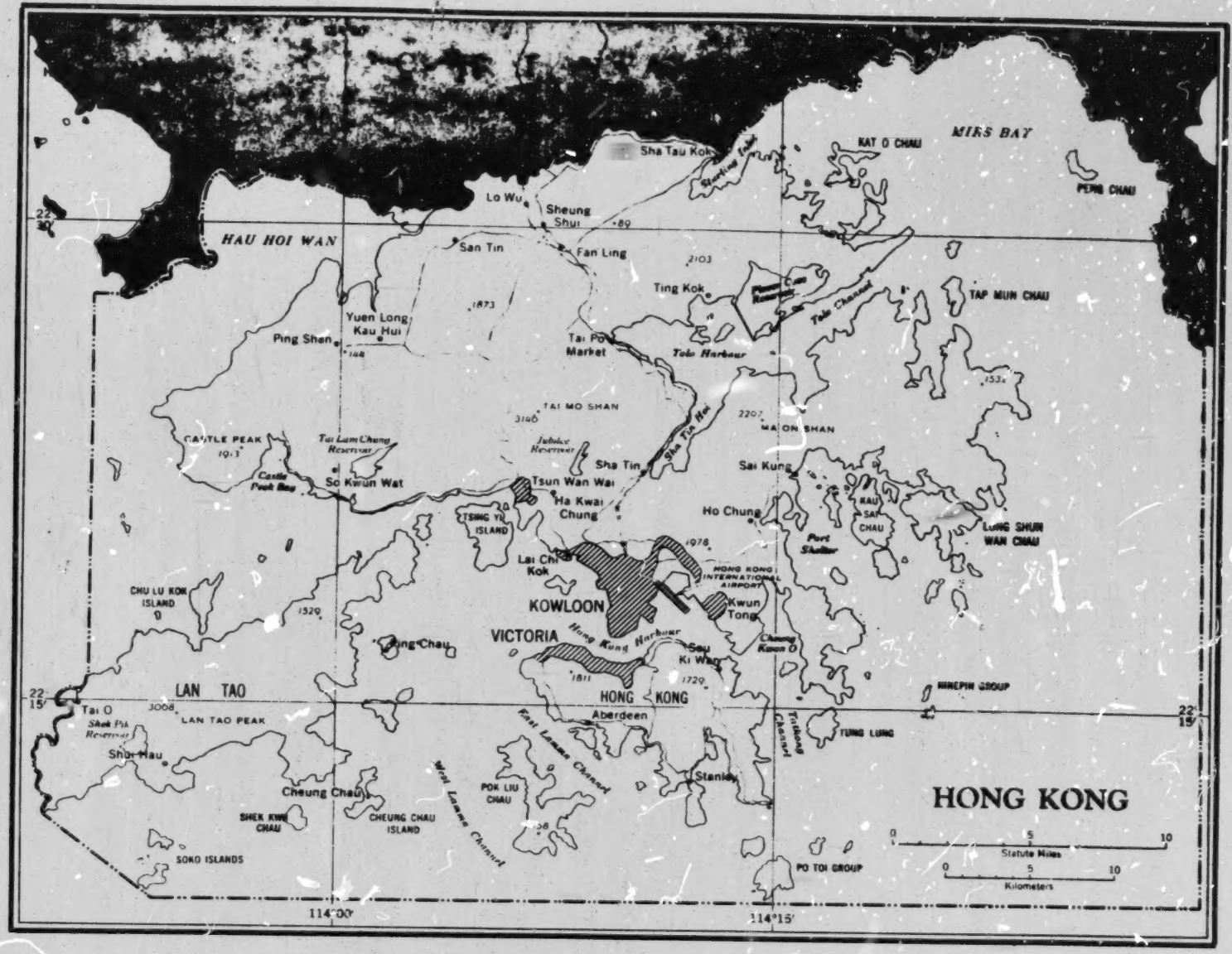


## REPUBLIC OF CHINA (Taiwan)

Taiwan (or Formosa) is an island ninety miles off the southeastern coast of the Chinese mainland. The Province of Taiwan consists of the island of Taiwan and the Penghu Islands (Pescadores) to the west. Quemoy (Kinmen) off Amoy and Matsu-tao (Matsu) off Foochow are the two principal islands held by the Republic of China.

Taiwan has a population of fifteen million (1971), most of whom are descentants of Chinese who migrated from the crowded coastal mainland areas of Fukien and Kwangtung within the last three hundred years. The approximately two million mainlanders who arrived in Taiwan in 1949 and 1950 came from all parts of China.

Although nearly every dialect of China is represented in Taiwan, an increasing number of people speak Mandarin, the official Chinese dialect. Native Taiwanese speak a variant of the Amoy dialect, while the Hakka dialect is spoken in some of the rural districts. As a result of fifty years of Japanese occupation, most older adults also speak Japanese. The literacy rate in the country is 84 percent.

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## HONG KONG

Hong Kong, a British Crown Colony, consists of the two large islands of Hong Kong and Lan Tao, a portion of the mainland adjoining the Chinese Province of Kwangtung, and more than two hundred smaller islands. The urban population is concentrated in the cities of Victoria and Kowloon, both situated on the colony's excellent natural harbor.

Hong Kong's population of four million (1971) is more than 98 percent Chinese, most of them Cantonese. Since the Chinese Revolution in 1949, Chinese by the hundreds of thousands have gone across the border to Hong Kong, many to await their visas to the United States.

World trade has urbanized Hong Kong so that the Chinese who were once mostly farmers have become city workers. Many Chinese educated in Hong Kong have studied British English as well as their native Cantonese-Chinese.

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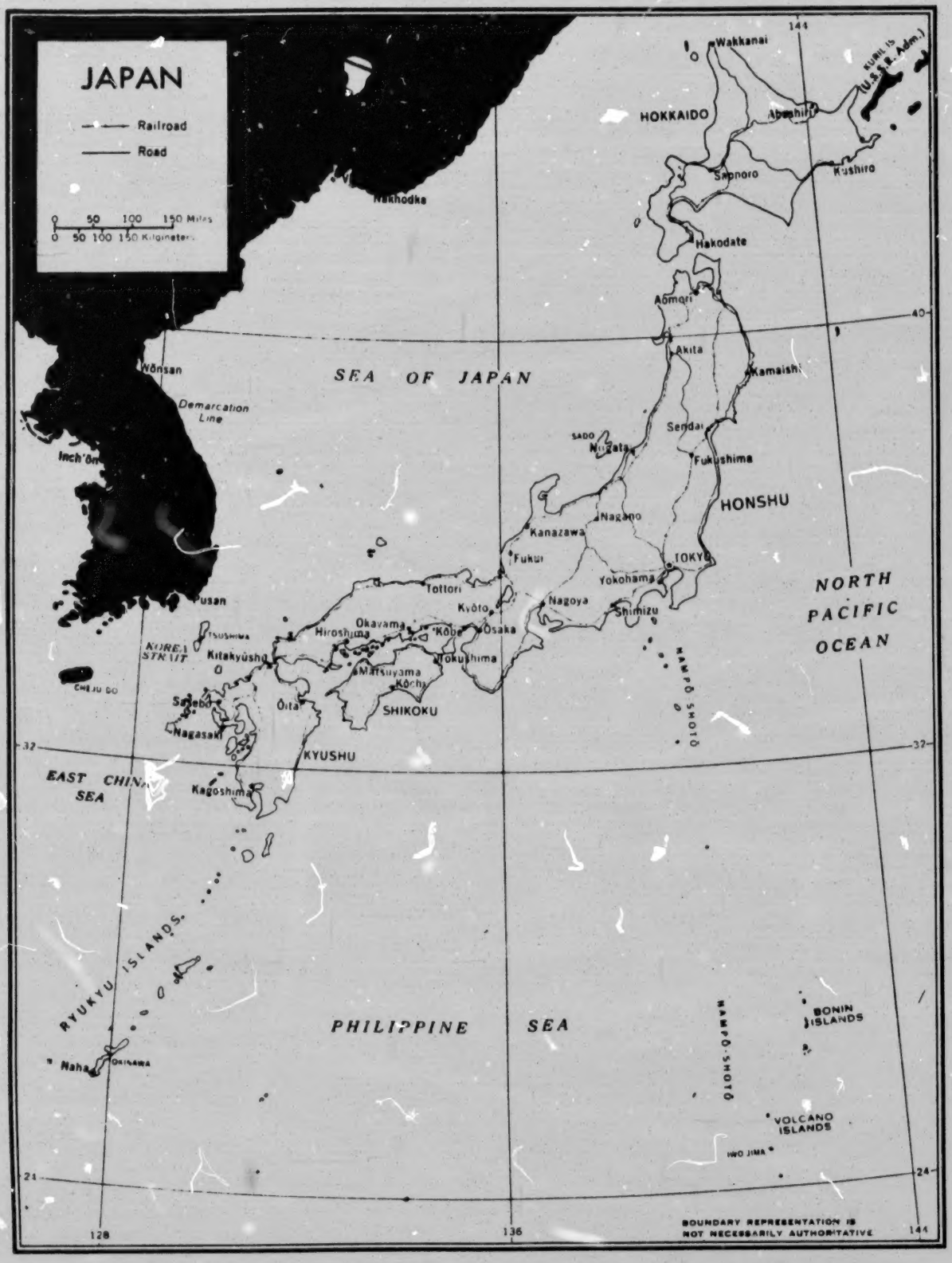

# JAPAN

Japan is comprised of four main islands--Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu--and more than 3,300 smaller islands. About four-fifths of the country is covered by hills and mountains, and the total land area is smaller than the state of California.

Japan is densely populated, with a total population of 107.5 million (1971) or an average of 737 people per square mile. The major cities, Tokyo (eleven million) and Osaka (three million), are among the largest in the world.

The Japanese people belong to the Mongoloid race, although Malayan and Caucasian mixture can also be found. Religion has historically played an important role in all phases of Japanese life: Buddhism, particularly in fine arts, social institutions, and thought, and Shintoism, a native religion, with its nationalistic and ritualistic characteristics. Only about .08 percent of the population are Christian, but they are an important and influential group.

Japan has a good, strong educational system, with free education provided for children from grades one through nine. Most students continue on through three-year senior high schools. Competition is severe for entry into institutions of higher learning, and much of the secondary education is geared towards the passing of the difficult entrance exams. Japan's literacy rate is 98 percent.

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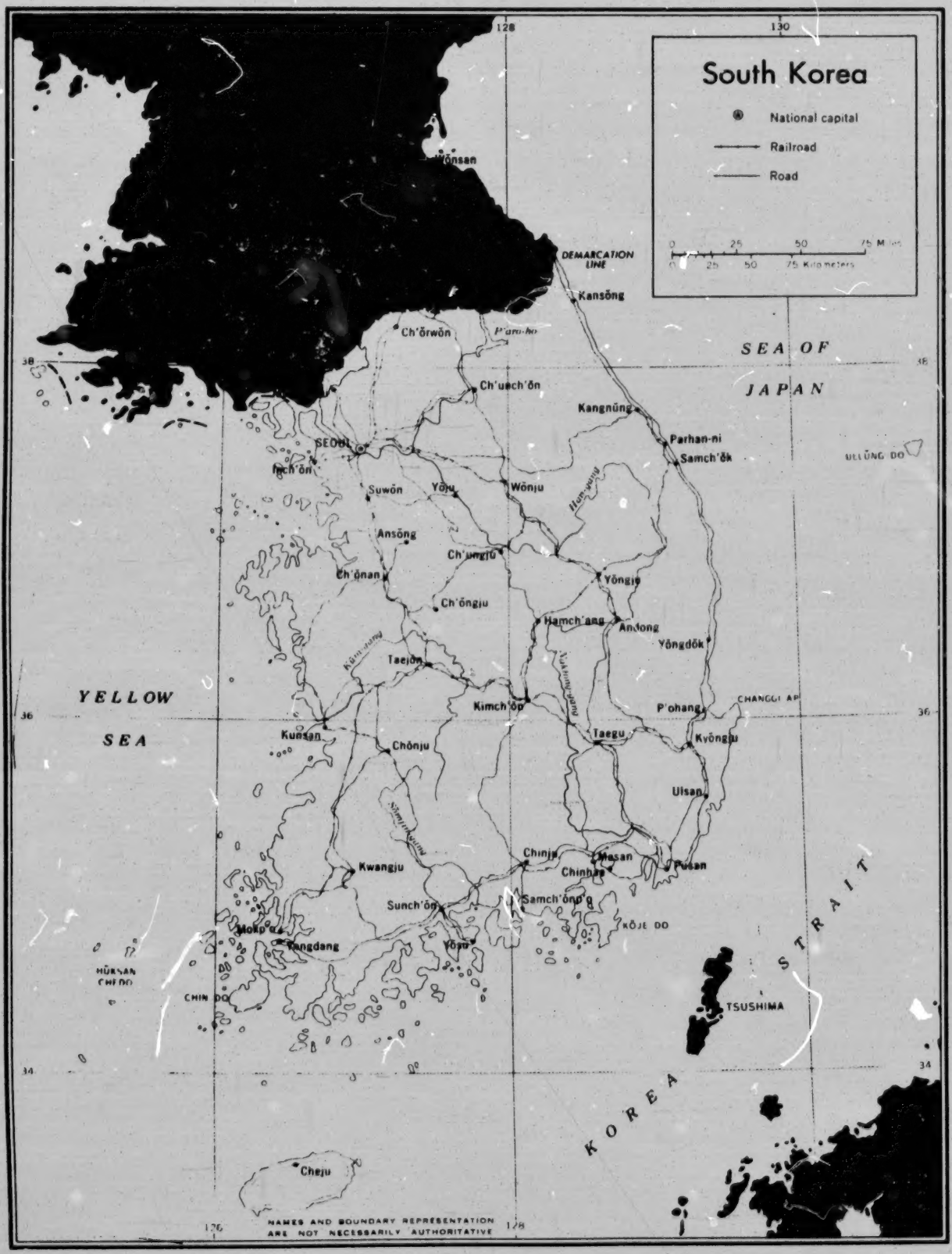

## THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Republic of Korea (South Korea) is the southern part of the Korean peninsula. This republic came into being south of the 38th parallel after World War II.

It has a population of 31.2 people in its 38,000 square miles of area, with an average of 821 people per square mile (1970 estimate). Seoul is both the capital and largest city. It has a population of about five million people.

The Korean people are Tungusic with some Mongol and Chinese mixture. Racially, they have less mixing than most other countries, and there are no real ethnic minorities in Korea. The largest group of Koreans outside of Korea is in Japan; some are also found in Manchuria and the Soviet Union.

The two most common religions are Buddhism and Shamanism. About 16 percent of the people are Buddhists. There are more Christians in the Republic of Korea--about two million or 6 percent of the population--than in any other Asian country except for the Republic of the Philippines.

The language is Korean. However, many older Koreans speak Japanese because of the Japanese occupation between 1910 and 1945. Now, English is rapidly becoming an important second language. There is a literacy rate of about 85 percent. Koreans use both a phonetic writing system, called hangul, and Chinese-style characters.

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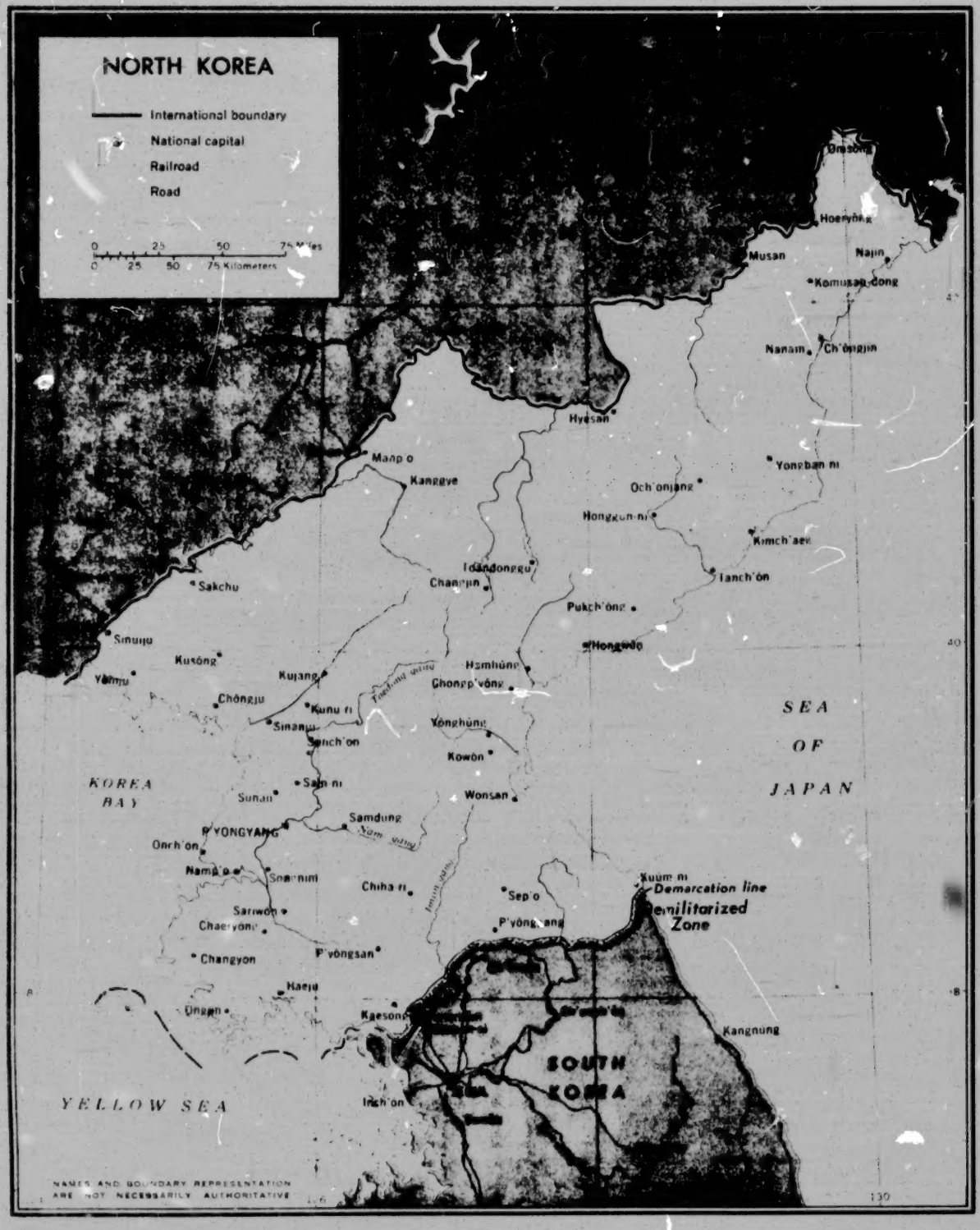

## THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is the northern part of the Korean peninsula.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has more area than South Korea (47,000 square miles), but it has less than half the population (only 13.8 million people, according to 1970 figures). There is an average of 295 people per square mile, most of them living near the coasts and in Pyongyang, the capital (900,000). The rest of North Korea has many mountains and hills, forests and narrow valleys which make farming difficult. Having most of Korea's natural resources, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is more industrial than agricultural.

As in South Korea, there is no real minority group living in North Korea. The language is Korean and only changes slightly in accent in diffent area of the country.

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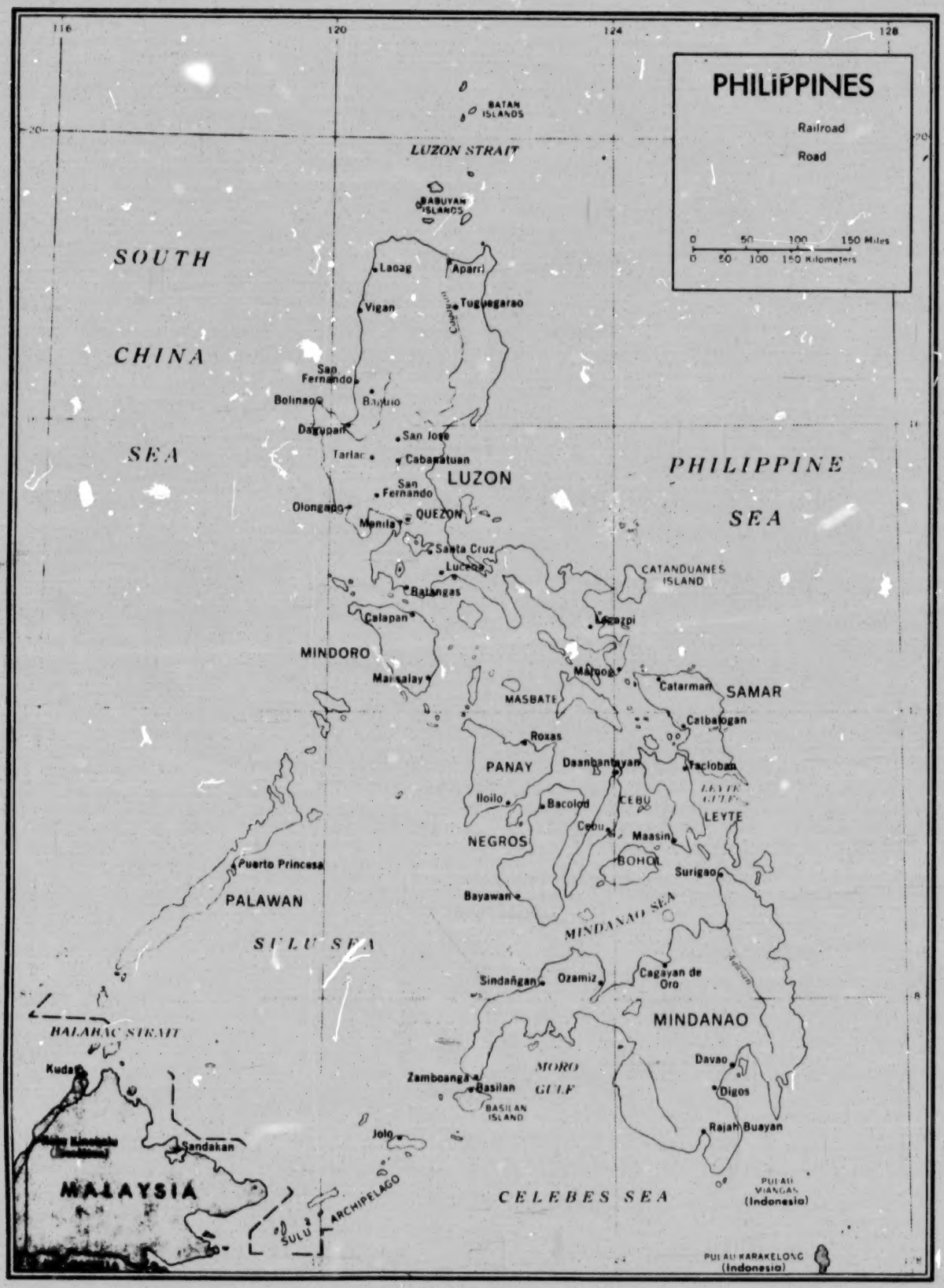

## THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Republic of the Philippines is a country comprised of some 7,100 islands and islets. Eleven of these islands make up about 95 percent of the total land area and population, with Luzon and Mindanao being the two largest. The total population is 38.8 million and Manila, the largest city, has four million people (as of 1971).

The Filipinos are Asian people with an Indonesian-Malaysian background. The 350 years of Spanish rule and the fifty years of American rule have had varying degrees of influence on the language, culture, and religion of the people. About 83 percent of the people are Roman Catholic, and about 9 percent Protestants. The major non-Westernized groups include the Muslims in the Sulu archipelago to the south and the mountaineer groups of Northern Luzon.

There are eight major languages spoken in the country, one of which is Tagalog. There are three offical languages: Pilipino, based on Tagalog, is the official language and is used in the school system; English is spoken as a second language by 40 percent of the people and is the universal language of professional people, the academia, and government, and Spanish is used largely by the social elite.

Education is important to the Filipinos, and compulsory primary education is a high priority goal of the country. Enrollment is high in schools of higher education, and the Philippines is one of the world leaders in the number of college graduates per capita.

Despite the centuries of outside influence, beginning with the coming of the Chinese in the ninth century, the Filipinos have kept their traditions and values. They are a warm and gentle people who value the family unit, which extends beyond the immediate family. Reciprocal obligations between members of the family circle are extensive and exacting.

## THE PHONOLOGICAL STUDY

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe and compare the sounds of English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, Tagalog, and Spanish, in order to show the difference between English and the non-English languages. This study is concerned with the segmental level only.

This section is divided into: (1) an explanation of the background of the study, (2) the description of the sounds of the six languages compared with English, and (3) a list of difficult or non-existent English sounds with their possible substitute sounds. The absence of an English sound from a native language does not necessarily signify the presence of a problem for the learner. However, this study is intended to help the learning situation by alerting the teacher to possible problems.

The English dialect which is described and used as the basis of this study is based on the dialect used by large bodies of educated middle class Americans from communities of midwestern and western United States. This particular type of American English is often called "general American English." Cantonese refers to the language spoken in Canton city and Hong Kong. Mandarin is the official language for both the People's Republic of China (Mainland China) and the Republic of China (Taiwan). The Korean sounds in this study are from the standard Korean which is the dialect spoken by the educated middle class natives of Seoul, the capital city of South Korea. The Japanese sounds in the study are those of standard Japanese based on the Tokyo dialect. For the Philippines, this study describes Tagalog, one of the eight major languages of the country. It is the basis of Pilipino, the national, more formal language. The Spanish sounds in this

study are mainly the Mexican-Spanish sounds. Sources of information have been native informants and reference material.

Since this information is intended for use by the classroom teacher, practicality has determined the manner of presentation. Linguistic terminology has been avoided wherever possible.

## The Description of Sounds

In this section the English consonants are compared with those of Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, Tagalog, and Spanish. They are arranged according to the points of articulation and manners of articulation. The symbols are those used by Prator and Robinett in the third edition of Manual of American English Pronunciation (1972).

The Consonant Chart appears on the following page.

Consonant Chart

| Position | Languages \ Sounds | p | b | t | d | k | g | tš | dž | f | v | θ | ð | s | z | š | ž | h | l | r | m | n | ŋ | w | y |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INITIAL | English | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| | Cantonese | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | ● | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Mandarin | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | ● | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Korean | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| | Japanese | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| | Tagalog | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Spanish | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| MEDIAL | English | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Cantonese | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Mandarin | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Korean | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Japanese | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Tagalog | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Spanish | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| FINAL | English | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Cantonese | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Mandarin | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Korean | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | Japanese | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Tagalog | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Spanish | | ● | | ● | ● | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | ● | | | ● | | | ● |

● - denotes existence of sound

The following points should be noted from the chart:

1. Stops in Cantonese and Mandarin are not voiced. These speakers usually perceive the voiced English stops (/b/, /d/, /g/) as voiceless unaspirated ones (i.e., /p/, /t/, /k/) and the voiceless English stops (/p/, /t/, /k/) as the voiceless aspirated ones (i.e., /$p^h$/, /$t^h$/, /$k^h$/ as in Peter, tea, and kiss). Therefore, English words like speak, steak, ski, etc. are often pronounced with strong aspiration by some Asian students.

Tagalog and Spanish /p/, /t/, and /k/ lack aspiration. Therefore, these unaspirated stops sound like voiced stops (/b/, /d/, and /g/) to Americans. The /t/ and /d/ sounds are produced with the tip of the tongue against the inside of the upper front teeth.

Note that there are no such combinations as /ti/, /tu/, /di/, or /du/ in Japanese. The romanizations /ti/, /tu/, /di/, and /du/ are produced in Japanese as chi, tsu, ji, and zu respectively. Possible problem words for the Japanese: words like T-shirt, together, dear, do, etc.

Korean has /b/, /d/, /g/, and /dž/ in medial position. Even though they do not contrast with /p/, /t/, /k/, and /tš/, respectively, they occur medially between any voiced sounds.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| apɔtsi | [abɔdzi] | father |
| ulpo | [ulbo] | one who cries a lot |
| aki | [agi] | baby |
| mata | [mada] | dawn |

2. None of the non-English languages has /v/, /θ/, and /ð/ sounds in any of the positions. Possible problems for Asian and Spanish students: value, thank, that, etc. Spanish has a sound close to /ð/ in medial and final position, but not in initial position. Difficult for Asians and Spanish speakers: words like they, those, etc.

3. As shown in the chart many of the languages do not have the /z/, /š/, and /ž/ sounds in any position. Problem words for both Asians and Spanish speakers: zoo, she, pleasure, etc. Japanese has the /z/ sound, but not the /zi/ combination.

Words like zero and zebra are difficult for them. The combination of /si/ in Japanese is pronounced like shi. Problems for Japanese, particulary at the beginning level: words like see, seat, seed, etc. In Spanish /s/ consonant clusters do not occur in initial position. Consequently, Spanish speakers often add the vowel /ɛ/ before the /s/.

4. Japanese, Korean, and Spanish have /tš̆/, but only Japanese has the /dž̆/ sound. Although Japanese has both these sounds, they do not occur in the word-final position. Problems for Asians: words like church, judge, etc.

5. The difficulty that Asians experience in pronouncing the English /r/ is well-known. As you can see from the chart, none of the languages, except for Mandarin, has an equivalent to this English sound. The Mandarin /r/ is unrounded when it comes before an unrounded vowel. Therefore, English words like round, rain, etc. are hard even for Mandarin speakers. A Mandarin /r/ cannot precede high front vowels. So English words like ring and read are also difficult for them. Only a few words like run, rope, etc. cause less trouble for Mandarin speakers.

   Japanese and Korean do not have /l/ or /r/. What they have is a sound in between. It is produced by the movement of the tip of the tongue touching the palate and releasing it. Its sound is somewhere between the American /r/, /l/, and /d/.

   The English retroflex /r/ doesn't occur in Tagalog nor in Spanish, but these languages have other kinds of /r/ sounds. One kind of

/r/ in Tagalog and Spanish is paralleled by the English /t/ in words like: city, better, or Betty. A great many words in Tagalog with /r/'s are loan words from English and Spanish. This /r/, found in loan words in Tagalog with /r/ and consonant clusters with /r/, and some intervocalic /r/'s in Spanish is generally a trill. That is, the tongue tip taps at the gum ridge behind the upper teeth several times. These /r/ sounds found in Tagalog and Spanish words like: regalo(gift) and abril(April) in both Spanish and Tagalog; perro(dog) in Spanish, and pruns (prunes), an English loan word in Tagalog. Tagalog and Spanish-speaking learners of English should be encouraged to curl their tongue tip up and back without contact in producing the English /r/.

6. Nasal sounds present fewer pronunciation problems. However, the /ŋ/ sound (as in sing) does not have an equivalent in Spanish. Difficult for many Spanish speakers: words like singer, ring, stranger, etc.

7. The Spanish /w/ is similar to the English /w/. However, the lips are more firmly rounded and there is a slight /g/ sound. Therefore, a word like would might sound very close to good.

8. The Spanish /y/ has a palatal fricative quality. For some speakers the sound is very close to /z/ or even /dž/. Thus, yes often sounds like /dž̆es/.

9. As can be seen from the chart, the Asian languages and Spanish have fewer consonants in word final position. Therefore, many English words ending in consonants often cause pronunciation problems. Asian as well as Spanish students have a tendency either to drop

the final consonant in the English word or to add an extra vowel (epenthetic vowel) to the English word. This could partially explain why the English person singular -s in the present tense verb, the plural -s, and the past tense ending -ed are so difficult for Asian and Spanish ESL students. For further illustration, some English loan words from these non-English languages are presented here:

| English | Cantonese |
|---|---|
| apartment | pak-men |
| boss | bo-si |

| English | Mandarin |
|---|---|
| motor | mo-to |
| Tom | tang-mu |

| English | Korean |
|---|---|
| bus | bu-su |
| strike | sɯ -tɯ -ray-ku |

| English | Japanese |
|---|---|
| apartment | apaato |
| hotel | hoteru |

Tagalog stops in word-final position are different from the English ones. They are un-released stops and many English native speakers think that Tagalog speakers drop the stops. For example, the English words past and pipe pronounced by Tagalog speakers with un-released /t/ and /p/ sound like pas and pie to American ears.

Consonant clusters are usually difficult for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students, because their syllables are CV (consonant/vowel) type. Therefore, English consonant clusters are often simplified or split when these students try to pronounce them.

Examples:

| English | Cantonese |
|---|---|
| stamp | si-tam |
| Fresno | fi-si-no |

| English | Mandarin |
|---|---|
| Friedman | fu-li-man |
| trust | to-la-si |

| English | Japanese |
|---|---|
| dress | do-re-su |
| gift | gi-fu-to |

| English | Korean |
|---|---|
| school | sш-kool |
| golf | gol-pu |

The chart below compares the English vowel sounds with those of the Asian and Spanish languages. The blanks indicate non-existent sounds.

Vowel Chart

| Position | Sound / Languages | iy | iə | I | Iə | ey | eə | ɛ | ɛə | æ | æə | ə | uw | ʊ | ow | ɔ | ɔy | a | ay | aw |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| INITIAL | English | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Cantonese | ● | | | | ● | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| | Mandarin | ● | | | | ● | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● | ● | |
| | Korean | | | | | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Japanese | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Tagalog | | | ● | | | | ● | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | ● |
| | Spanish | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | |
| MEDIAL | English | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Cantonese | ● | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | | ● | | |
| | Mandarin | ● | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Korean | | | | | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Japanese | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Tagalog | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | ● |
| | Spanish | ● | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| FINAL | English | ● | | | | ● | | | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Cantonese | ● | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Mandarin | ● | | | | ● | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Korean | | | | | | | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Japanese | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | ● | | |
| | Tagalog | | | ● | | | | ● | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | ● |
| | Spanish | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | ● | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | |

● - denotes existence of sound

As shown in the chart, the English vowels /I/, /æ/, and /U/ do not exist in most of the languages. Words like in, am, put, etc. are usually difficult for these students.

Japanese and Korean do not really have diphthongs. However, they have combinations of two vowels, with each vowel retaining its proper sound quality and duration. For example, the chart shows there is no /iy/ sound in Japanese. What the Japanese have is /i/ or /i+i/. The Japanese word for big is thus pronounced /o-o-ki-i/.

The correspondence between the vowel sounds of English and those of the non-English languages is more complicated than the correspondence between the consonant sounds. When compared to English, most of the non-English vowels are of the "almost-but-not-quite" type. For example, our vowel chart shows no /iy/, /ey/, /uw/, or /ow/ for Korean, Spanish, Japanese, and Tagalog. However, these languages do have vowel sounds that are almost like the sound of the first component of these English diphthongs.

Another group of difficult sounds involves the vowel /ə/. They are: /iə/ (as in feel), /Iə/ (as in hill), /eə/ (as in sale), /ɛə/ (as in there), and /æə/ (as in shall). Because most of the languages in the chart do not have the vowel /ə/ and also because this group of vowels usually comes before the /l/ sound or the /r/ sound in English, they become quite difficult for these Asian and Spanish students.

## CONCLUSION

The chart below summarizes those English sounds that could predictably cause problems for speakers of the respective languages because of the non-existence or the distribution of these sounds. It may need to be pointed out again that these are not the only criteria for prediction.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chinese | b | d | g | tš | dž | v | θ | ð | z | š | ž | r | | | I | æ | ʊ | | | | |
| Japanese | f | v | θ | ð | l | r | | | | | | | | | I | æ | ə | ʊ | ɔ | | |
| Korean | b | d | g | tš | dž | f | v | θ | ð | z | š | ž | r | | I | ɛ | ʊ | ɔ | | | |
| Tagalog | tš | dž | f | v | θ | ð | z | š | ž | r | | | | | I | æ | ə | uw | ɔ | ow | |
| Spanish | dž | θ | ð | z | š | ž | h | r | | | | | | | I | ɛ | æ | ə | ʊ | ɔ | |

In learning a new language it is only a natural tendency for the learner to substitute the sounds of his native language for the new sounds which he probably cannot even distinguish. Take the /θ/ sound, which does not appear in any of the languages in our study. The usual substitution is the closest sound, /s/, as in: I think, which becomes I sink; Throw the ball, which becomes Slow the ball, and Go to the health department, which turns out as Go to the hells department.

The chart below summarizes the common substitutions in the various languages:

| English | b | d | g | tš | dž | f | v | θ | ð | z | š | ž | h | l | r | ŋ | I | æ | ə | ʊ | ɔ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chinese | p | t | k | $ts^h$ | ts | | f | s | s | s/ts | s | s | | | l | | iy | ɛ | | uw | |
| Japanese | | | | | | h | b | s | z | | s | | | R | R | | i | ɛ/a | a | u | o |
| Korean | p | t | k | $tš^h$ | ts | $p^h$/hw | p/b | s/t | t/d | tš/dž | | tš/dž | | R | R | | i | | | u | ə/o |
| Tagalog | | | | ts | dy | p | b | t | d | s | s | s | | | r̃ | | i | a | a | u | o |
| Spanish | β | ð | ɣ | | y/ž | | β/b | s/t | s/d | s | tš | tš | x | | r̃/R | n | i | a | a | u | o |

Some notes in relation to the chart on the previous page:

1. Blank spaces in the chart indicate that no substitution occurs generally as these are not problem sounds.
2. Since Cantonese speakers and Mandarin speakers generally make the same kinds of substitutions, the two languages have been combined as "Chinese" in the chart.
3. Koreans substitute /b, d, g/ with /p, t, k/ in word initial and final positions only. The pronunciation of some beginning Korean students may make words like bed, dog sound like pet or talk to English listeners.
4. The h in /ts$^{h}$/ and /p$^{h}$/ indicates that these sounds are pronounced with relatively strong aspiration. The slash line between the symbols means or. Thus /s/ts/ means that the English sound in question can be substituted either by /s/ or by /ts/.
5. Meaning of symbols: /B/ - voiced bilabial fricative; /ɣ/ - a voiced velar fricative, /x/ - a voiceless velar fricative; /R/ - a flap r; /r̃/ - a trill r
6. The Spanish /d/ in medial and final positions becomes a weak /ð/ (i.e., ladder sounds like lather and breed like breathe when spoken by Spanish-speakers).

Further examples of common substitutions:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Rudolph | lu-tau-fu | (Mandarin) |
| Theodore | si-a-to | (Mandarin) |
| Bob Hope | pok̄ -hap | (Cantonese) |
| Bing Crosby | ping-ko-lo-si-pei | (Cantonese) |
| address | a-do-re-su | (Japanese) |
| film | fui-ru-mu | (Japanese) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| milk | mi-ru-ku | (Japanese) |
| Seven-Up | se-bun appu | (Japanese) |
| fine | 'pine' | (Korean) |
| wife | 'wipe' | (Korean) |
| clue | 'crew' | (Korean) |
| crown | 'clown' | (Korean) |
| veteran | /bɛtɛran/ | (Tagalog) |
| Scotch | /iskats/ | (Tagalog) |
| thunderbird | /tandɛr bɛrd/ | (Tagalog) |
| janitor | /dyanitor/ | (Tagalog) |
| very | /beri/ | (Spanish) |
| ship | /tšip/ | (Spanish) |
| school | /ɛskul/ | (Spanish) |
| everything | /ebritin/ | (Spanish) |

## Summary

Similarities and differences between the sounds of the student's native language and his target language (in this case, English) can present a variety of problems to the learner.

When a sound in English is similar to but not the same as a sound in the student's native language, like the /r/ in Mandarin and the /p/ in Tagalog, the difficulty in learning that sound may be greater than that of learning an entirely new sound. Teachers should thus be aware that close similarities should not be assumed to be trivial differences and therefore not necessary to drill.

Pronunciation lessons for adult learners should consist of mimicry and practice, with the added dimension of practical phonetics. That is, it would be helpful for adults to know the mechanics of the formation of sounds. Also useful would be comparison with the sounds in his own language.

Although this study has had to concern itself with sound segments only, the importance of suprasegmentals in oral communication cannot be overemphasized. The monosyllabic and tonal characteristics of Chinese and the staccato rhythm of all the Asian languages make the learning of proper stress and intonation in English a definite problem.

### Consonant Problems

/r/ 1. Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Tagalog speakers should be shown the contrast between the point and manner of articulation of the English /r/ and their flap /R/. Remind them that the tongue does not touch any part of the mouth, but that it curls back and up while the /r/ is being produced.

2. Speakers of Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Tagalog should be reminded to round their lips in pronouncing the /r/ sound.
3. Mandarin speakers should be given extra practice in producing the /r/ sound before high front vowels, e.g., read, ring, record, etc.
4. Asian students should also be reminded to prepare and anticipate the sound following /r/ and be ready to pronounce it.

/l/ 1. Japanese and Korean students should be made aware of the contrast between the /l/ in English and their flap /R/ as they tend to substitute their /r/ for /l/ in English.

/p/ 1. In pronouncing these stops in initial and final positions
/t/ students should be made to aspirate these sounds. Use the "paper
/k/ test" to demonstrate the difference between an aspirated and an unaspirated sound.

/f/ 1. Have the Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, and Spanish-speaking students
/v/ press their lower lip slightly against the upper teeth and let a stream of air pass through the crevices of the upper teeth and lower lip for the /f/ sound. Using a mirror to see the lip and teeth position in producing these sounds can be helpful.

/s̆/ 1. Have the students start the sound by producing the /s/ sound, then rounding their lips to make the /s̆/ sound. Contrast the position of the lips in pronouncing the /s/ sound as in see (unrounded) with that of the /s̆/ sound as in she (rounded).

/z/ 1. Have the students start by producing the /s/ sound. Have them feel their vocal cords as they voice the /s/ to produce the /z/.

Initial /s/ consonant cluster:

1. Have students prolong the initial /s/ sound:

   school /ssssskuwl/

   Spanish /sssspæ̆nIš̆/

Vowel Problems

/ə/ 1. Demonstrate the sound by punching yourself in the stomach and letting the sound escape. Have students try it themselves.

2. Caution the students not to open their mouths too wide for this sound.

3. Integrate the practice of this sound with the teaching of articles. As the students shift their attention to the structure, the production of the sound becomes an unconscious process.

   a. Show objects or pictures of objects and have the students identify them: It's a dictionary.

      It's an orange.

   b. Show two items and have the students select one:

      I want the pen.

      I want the lesson.

/I/ 1. Contrast the sounds of /I/ and /iy/ as in bit /bIt/ and beat /biyt/. Have students feel the relaxed muscles when /I/ is pronounced, as opposed to the tense muscles when /iy/ is pronounced.

2. Unstressed vowels are generally pronounced /ə/ and sometimes /I/.

/æ/ 1. A smile on the face will make this sound easier to form.

## SYNTACTIC INFORMATION

A limited comparative syntactic study of English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, and Spanish was undertaken by the Asian Project staff. The structures studied were those usually found in beginning and lower intermediate ESL courses. Making predictions from this study, a list of those structures which would appear to cause students the most trouble was compiled. A summary chart of such predicted problems (see the end of this section), was sent to teachers of various adult ESL classes in the Los Angeles Unified School District to see if the problems predicted actually were serious problems in practice. In general the teachers' responses confirmed the predictions made by the staff.

The following description of syntactic problems makes use of both the practical input of the teachers and the theoretical research of the staff. Each of the structural items is discussed in the order which corresponds to the number of teacher responses indicating it to be a problem. Charts have been made, where applicable, to contrast the sentence structure of the various languages. It is hoped that this study will help teachers understand the reasons for student errors in using these structures and so aid them in their teaching.

### Articles

Mistakes in the use of articles was one of the major problem areas identified for speakers of all the Asian languages. These errors fell into several categories: the omission of articles, confusion of the definite and the indefinite article, and errors in the use of a and an.

Omission of Articles. It is not difficult to see why the omission of articles is a frequent error when one knows that there is no article at all

in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Although Tagalog uses articles, none is used in sentences with linking verbs. See the chart below.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | This | is | a | book. |
| Chinese | this | is | | book |
| Japanese | this | book | | is |
| Korean | this | thing | book | is |
| Tagalog | book | this | | |
| Spanish | (This) | is | a | book. |

Definite vs. Indefinite Articles. Whether to use the definite or the indefinite article in English presents a problem for Asian students. To express the concept of indefiniteness Chinese, Japanese, and Korean use the numeral one. Thus these students (as well as Spanish students) sometimes say, "I want one book," to mean, "I want a book." To express the concept of definiteness, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean often use the equivalent of the English word this. Thus students often say, "I bought this book," for "I bought the book."

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | I | bought | the | book. |
| Chinese | I | bought | (this) | book. |
| Japanese | (I) | (this) | book | bought |
| Korean | (I) | (this) | book | bought |
| Tagalog | Bought | I | the | book. |
| Spanish | (I) | bought | the | book. |

A vs. An. The distinction between a and an is often a problem for students of English. Since Chinese, Japanese, and Korean do not use articles, the use of a and an is just one further problem to solve. It is a problem of pronunciation--knowing which initial sounds require an. It is also a problem in writing--being able to identify the written words which require an.

The differing writing systems of English and Chinese, Japanese, and Korean may add to the problem.

Do as an Auxiliary

In English, do is used as an auxiliary to form a question or a negative statement. There is no parallel structure in the non-English languages. See the following chart for an example of question formation in the different languages:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | What | does she eat | in the morning? | |
| Chinese | she | in the morning | eat | what? |
| Japanese | that person | in the morning | what | eat? |
| Korean | that person | in the morning | what | eat? |
| Tagalog | what | the eating she | in the morning? | |
| Spanish | What | eats (she) | in the morning? | |

Below is an example of the negative in the different languages:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | He | does not | have | a book. |
| Chinese | he | not | have | book |
| Japanese | that person | book | have not | |
| Korean | that person | book | have not | |
| Tagalog | not have | he | book | |
| Spanish | (He) | no | has | book. |

From these examples, we can see that no equivalent to the English auxiliary do is used to form a question or a negative statement in the non-English languages. It is also apparent that the word order is different among the different languages.

Other grammatical features related to the English auxiliary, such as conjugation, agreement, etc. further complicate the students' learning problems.

Prepositions

English prepositions are very difficult for Asian students. For example, the locative prepositions in English do not have a one-to-one correspondence to prepositions in any of the four Asian languages. In most cases, there is only one form in these languages to equate with two or more prepositions in English. For instance, the distinction made in English between in the bank and at the bank would not be made by any of the four Asian languages or Spanish, since they use only one form to cover both meanings.

Asian students, as well as students from many other countries, have great difficulty with the prepositions which have no apparent logical meaning. In, on, and at used with dates and locations are some of these, as are those prepositions (or particles) attached to verbs--listen to, look for, dress up, etc.

Another problem related to the learning of English prepositions is the word order. The chart below illustrates the contrasting word order of the locative phrase in the closet. Note that when referring to specific locations, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean use specific words like inside or outside in addition to the prepositions in or at.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | in | the | closet | | |
| Chinese | in-at | | closet | inside | |
| Japanese | | | closet (of) | inside | in-at |
| Korean | | | closet | inside | in-at |

Answering the Negative Questions

In answering negative questions, Asians tend to agree that the negative is the fact or to disagree that the negative is true. For example, it is quite common to hear the following conversation among Asian students:

S-1: Aren't you going there?

S-2: Yes, I'm not going there/No, I'm going there.

In the minds of the Asian ESL students, the yes means, "Yes, you're right. I'm not going there." The word no means, "No, you're wrong. I'm going there." Because of this, Asian students often make mistakes when they answer the negative questions in English.

Some vs. Any

The contrast between the words some and any in the following context often causes problems for Asian students:

"I have some Chinese books."

"I don't have any Chinese books."

In the Asian languages and Spanish, the concept of some and any in cases similar to the above is expressed by the same word. Therefore, it is not uncommon to hear students saying the following:

*"I don't have some Chinese books."

*"I have any Chinese books."

Count Nouns vs. Non-Count Nouns

The Asian languages that are included in this handbook do not make a distinction between count and non-count nouns. Thus, structures related to this in English cause learning difficulty for Asian students. For example, the fact that there is no plural form in English non-count nouns often confuses Asian students who have a tendency to use incorrect forms such as:

*I used many butters."

*"I drank many waters."

*"He has lots of monies."

As is shown above, the quantifiers many and much used with a count noun or a non-count noun are also difficult for Asian students.

Although Spanish has non-count nouns, they do not always correspond to the English non-count nouns. Also, while English uses two quantifiers, much and many, Spanish uses just one with singular and plural forms.

Another problem related to this count noun/non-count noun distinction is found in sentences like: "There's too much butter on the bread." Asian students often make mistakes like: *"There are too much butters on the bread."

The fact that, even with a quantifier like much, one still has to use a singular verb puzzles the Asian students. To them much means more than one, and a plural verb would feel more natural.

Many vs. Much

This contrast is related to the count/non-count noun distinction. If a student cannot recognize a count noun and a non-count noun, it will be difficult for him to learn the usage of many vs. much. Common mistakes related to this distinction are seen in the following incorrect English sentences:

*"How many money do you have?"

*"How much books did you read?"

The Pronoun It

In many of the Asian languages and in Spanish there is no special pronoun that is equivalent to the English non-human pronoun it. For example, if one asks, "What is it?" an Asian student might answer, "That/this is a dog," instead of, "It's a dog."

In English, the pronoun it can refer to infants. Assure the students that it is perfectly proper to ask, "What is it?" if they don't know the sex of a baby.

Cases in Pronouns

Pronouns in Asian languages do not have a complex declension system as English does. The paradigm like the following shows that the Asian pronouns are not equivalent to the English ones.

| English | | Asian Languages | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nominative | Objective | Nominative | Objective |
| I | me | I | I |
| you | you | you | you |
| he | him | he | he |
| she | her | | |
| it | it | | |
| we | us | we | we |
| they | them | they | they |
| Possessive(Adj.) | Possessive(Pro.) | Possessive (Adj.--Pro.) | |
| my | mine | my | my |
| your | yours | your | your |
| his | his | his | his |
| her | hers | | |
| its | its | | |
| our | ours | our | our |
| their | theirs | their | their |

Since the nominative case and the objective case have the same form in the Asian languages, the following mistakes are not uncommon:

*"He gave I a book."

*"Him gave me a book."

Since there is no difference between the form of the possessive adjective and the possessive pronouns in the Asian languages, errors in possessives are also common:

*"This book is my."

*"Mine book is red."

Spanish presents quite a different problem. It uses cases similar to those of English, but the distinction made in English between second and third persons is lost in the Spanish object pronouns, possessive adjectives, and possessive pronouns.

Short Answer Forms for Yes/No Questions

When an Asian is asked a yes/no question, he often answers just yes or no or gives a long complete answer. This is because of a direct translation from his native language to English. Note the following chart for answers to yes/no questions with the verb to be:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | Yes, | he | is | (a doctor). |
| Chinese | Yes. | (he | is | doctor). |
| Japanese | Yes, | so | is | |
| Korean | Yes, | so | is | |
| Tagalog | Yes. | (doctor, | (he) | |
| Spanish | Yes. | (he) | is | (doctor). |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | No, | he | is not | (a doctor). |
| Chinese | No. | (he | not is | doctor). |
| Japanese | No, | so | is not. | |
| Korean | No, | so | not is. | |
| Tagalog | No. | (he | is not | doctor). |
| Spanish | No. | (he) | no is | (doctor). |

Singular vs. Plural Nouns

Nouns in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean do not have a special morpheme (or a word) to express the plural meaning. When the fact of plurality is important, it is expressed by numerals. For example, Asians often say, *"I have three book," instead of, "I have three books." This is because

the numeral three automatically includes the plural meaning in their languages. To these Asian languages, another morpheme (or word) to express plurality would be redundant.

The difficulty students have with English plurals is also due to the problems of pronunciation (see Phonology section). Many of the Asian languages do not end words with the /s/ sound. Also the fact that the English plural morpheme has three pronunciations (i.e., /s/, /z/, /əz/) complicates the learning even more.

Tagalog has the plural morpheme before the noun. This presents another kind of problem.

Gender in Pronouns

Pronouns in Asian languages do not show gender. (Chinese, nowadays, makes a distinction in gender in the written form of the pronouns, but the pronunciation remains the same.) Thus, it is quite common to hear an Asian student use the word she to refer to a male or vice versa. For instance, he may say:

"Mr. Smith is my friend. *She is an American." or

*"Mrs. Smith hurt himself this morning."

Possessive 's vs. of

This is a problem particularly for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students. In their languages there is no distinction between an animate possessor or an inanimate possessor. So they may say: "Mr. Smith's book" and *"the table's corner." The students need to know the English pattern, "the corner of a/the table" and to become aware of the different possessive patterns in English.

Spanish speakers also have a problem with this since Spanish has only the of construction for possessives.

Impersonal It

There is no equivalent to the English impersonal it in the Asian or Spanish languages. Note the literal translations below:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | It's | a | nice | day. | |
| Chinese | Today | weather | nice. | | |
| Japanese | Today | | nice | day | is. |
| Korean | Today | weather | good | | is. |
| Tagalog | Beautiful | the weather. | | | |
| Spanish | Is | a day | nice. | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | It | takes | three hours | to get there. | |
| Chinese | Get | there | need | three hour | |
| Japanese | Getting | there | three hour | take. | |
| Korean | There | getting | three hour | take. | |
| Tagalog | About | three hours | (the trip) | before to get there. | |
| Spanish | Itself | needs | three hours | for to arrive. | |

From these charts we can see why the impersonal usage of it is difficult for the students.

Tenses in Verbs/Irregular Verbs

The concept of the various English tenses is not new to the Asian students. However, the formation of tenses with the auxiliary and past and present participles is a new process. Such tense formations are all new to the Asian students, and they become real learning problems for the Asian ESL students.

The problem for Spanish speakers is not so much the form but the meaning. Present tense in Spanish, for example, can be used to indicate a present action which in English would require the present progressive.

Verb tense seems to cause special problems among Chinese students. This is probably due to the fact that in Chinese the tense markers are optional. Only if the speaker is emphasizing the fact of the time does he use the tense marker. For example:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | She | is | coming | now. |
| Chinese | She | now | come. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| English | She | went. |
| Chinese | She | go. |

Irregular verbs are difficult for all students of English, but the difficulty is even greater for the Asian ESL students. In general, their verb systems inflect regularly or, as in Chinese, they do not have to inflect at all.

Verbs vs. Infinitives

The English infinitives with to are difficult for the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, who have the tendency to drop the to. It is quite possible, then, to hear the following incorrect English sentence, *"I want come tomorrow" for "I want to come tomorrow." The following chart shows this problem:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | I | am | learning | to drive. |
| Chinese | I | | learn | drive. |
| Japanese | I | | driving | learn. |
| Korean | I | | driving | learn. |
| Tagalog | | | Learning | I to drive. |
| Spanish | (I) | am | learning | to to drive. |

Question Words

Many of the wh-question words do not occur at the beginning of a question in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Thus this becomes a problem for some of these students. The following charts compare the word order of a few wh-questions in the different languages:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | What | is | your | name? |
| Chinese | Your | name | is | what? |
| Japanese | Your | name | what | is? |
| Korean | Your | name | what | is? |
| Tagalog | What | the your | name? | |
| Spanish | What | is | your | name? |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | Who | is | Joe? | |
| Chinese | Joe | is | who? | |
| Japanese | Joe | who | is? | |
| Korean | Joe | who | is? | |
| Tagalog | Who | particle | Joe? | |
| Spanish | Who | is | Joe? | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | When | can | you | come? |
| Chinese | You | when | can | come? |
| Japanese | (You) | when | come? | |
| Korean | (You) | when | come | can? |
| Tagalog | When | you | can | come? |
| Spanish | When | can | (you) | to come? |

From these charts we can see why the wh-questions in English are not easy for the Asian students.

Comparative Adjectives or Adverbs

Using -er or -est to form comparative adjectives or adverbs is new to the Asians and Spanish speakers. In these languages they are usually expressed by words similar to the English words more or most. The sentence pattern for comparisons is also different from the English. See the chart below:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | John | is | taller | than | Bill. | |
| Chinese | John | in companion to | | Bill | tall. | |
| Japanese | John | Bill | (more) | tall | is. | |
| Korean | John | Bill | (more) | tall | is. | |
| Tagalog | More tall | | John | than | Bill. | |
| Spanish | John | is | more | tall | than | Bill. |

Subject-Verb Agreement

The most difficult problem in subject-verb agreement is the third person singular -s. This concept is new to the Asian students since verbs in their languages do not change form (conjugate) to agree with the subject.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | He | wants | drumsticks. | |
| Chinese | He | want | drumstick. | |
| Japanese | (He) | drumstick | desirable | is. |
| Korean | (He) | drumstick | want | do. |
| Tagalog | Want | he | drumstick. | |
| Spanish | (He) | wants | drumsticks. | |

Pronunciation is another factor that makes third person -s a problem for Asians. In their languages no word ever ends with /s/.

Other difficult areas related to this topic include the irregular inflection of the verb to be and the verb to have. Some of the beginning

students may make mistakes like:

*"I is a student." or

*"He have two books."

Verb to Be + Adjective

In Chinese and Tagalog no verb to be is needed when the adjective is in the predicative position, not modifying any noun. For example:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| English | I | am | hungry. |
| Chinese | I | | hungry. |
| Tagalog | Hungry | I. | |

Because of this, Chinese and Tagalog beginning students may make mistakes like:

*"She pretty."

*"This book expensive."

Spanish presents a different problem since in many cases it uses have plus a noun rather than be plus an adjective. Thus students often say, *"I have hungry," for "I am hungry."

This/That vs. These/Those

The demonstrative in the four Asian languages do not inflect in number. Therefore, the distinctions between this vs. that and that vs. those are new to the Asian students. The pronunciation of these words also causes problems. As mentioned in the phonology section, the th sound does not exist in any of the Asian languages. Also, the contrast between this and these is further complicated by the pronunciation of the vowels in the two words.

Tense in Auxiliaries

Both the formation of the verb phrase with auxiliaries and the agreement of subject and auxiliary in number cause problems for speakers of Asian languages. Because students have learned to inflect the verb for past tense and for third person singular, they sometimes try to inflect auxiliaries and/or verb forms which do not take inflections. For example, students may use the following incorrect forms:

*"He did not wanted to go."

*"He can not goes."

*"He can not went."

Such errors are an intrinsic problem of learning English and not direct translations from the students" first language.

Summary Chart

The summary chart sent to the teachers appears on the following pages.

Predicted Difficulties of Some Basic English Grammatical Features for Asian Students (Also Spanish-speaking)

| Is it difficult? / Grammatical features | Chinese | Japanese | Korean | Tagalog | Spanish |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. a vs. an | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 2. definite vs. indefinite articles | yes | yes | yes | yes | no* |
| 3. this/that vs. these/those | yes | yes | yes | yes | no |
| 4. many vs. much | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 5. some vs. any | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 6. singular vs. plural nouns | yes | yes | yes | yes | no* |
| 7. count vs. mass nouns | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 8. I, II, III personal pronouns vs. it | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 9. singular vs. plural pronouns | no | yes | yes | no | no |
| 10. genders in pronouns | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 11. cases in pronouns | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 12. possessive "s" vs. of | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 13. impersonal it | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 14. regular vs. irregular verbs | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes* |

Predicted Difficulties of Some Basic English Grammatical Features for Asian Students (Also Spanish-speaking)

| Is it difficult? / Grammatical features | Chinese | Japanese | Korean | Tagalog | Spanish |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. tenses in verbs | yes | no | no | no | no |
| 16. subject and verb number agreement | yes | yes | yes | yes | no |
| 17. verb vs. infinitive | yes | yes | yes | yes | no* |
| 18. tenses in auxiliary | yes | yes | yes | yes | no* |
| 19. do as an auxiliary | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 20. verb to be + adjective | yes | no | no | yes | no |
| 21. time adverb at the end of a sentence (or after the main verb) | yes | yes | yes | yes | no |
| 22. prepositions | yes | yes | yes | yes | no |
| 23. question words like "who, where, when, etc." at the beginning of a question | yes | yes | yes | no | no |
| 24. short answer forms for yes/no questions | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| 25. answering the negative questions | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes* |
| 26. comparative adjective/adverb | yes | yes | yes | yes | yes |

* denotes some disagreement on the part of the teachers.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this contrastive syntactic study has been to provide the teacher with information that can give her some idea of the types of errors to watch for and some knowledge of why such errors are made by Asian and Spanish-speaking students.

With this information the teacher will be able to anticipate problem areas in a lesson and thus be able to plan a sequence that can deal with some of these difficulties.

The study has shown that certain features such as the use of articles, tense formation, and plurals are difficult for the Asians. In writing dialogues, drills, and exercises the teacher will want to include these items. Other activities to help deal with the Asians' problems with English syntax:

1. Special drills for extra practice on the his/her/its distinctions
2. The use of scrambled word cards to give students practice in using English word order
3. The use of chalk, dittoes, or transparency marking pens of different colors to emphasize inflections such as 's, -s, and -ed

During the free conversation time each day, teachers may want to focus attention on just one type of error to point out and correct.

Perhaps the most important thing to be gained from this study is a better understanding of the students and their problems. It may help the teacher to realize that when a student makes a mistake, he is probably not just being careless or lazy. He is just making assumptions based on his own language or on his limited knowledge of English. The teacher can be more patient and understanding with the confusions and direct translations that result because she will know some of the causes.

# BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP

## INTRODUCTION

Because American and Asian cultures are vastly different and because contact between the cultures has been very limited due to language and geographical barriers, there are many stereotypes on both sides. Teachers should be aware of these stereotypes, not only to understand the world outlook of the Asian students, but also to truly educate by emphasizing our common humanity.

To the peasant, laborer, teacher, and intellectual in Asian, the mere mention of America conveys the idea of an unimaginably affluent society. Not so many years ago, some Asians believed that American streets were paved with gold. Some Chinese, for example, continue to call the state of California the "golden mountain." Hollywood movies and literature of all types, including official publications, have nurtured this concept. So strong was their belief in the wealth of America that many Asians even borrowed money to migrate here. Once in America, they have endured the hardest kinds of work because their families expected them to succeed in the land of opportunity.

While Asians feel that Americans are rich materially, they also feel that Americans may be poor spiritually in certain aspects. Asians venerate age, and to them age denotes maturity and wisdom in both the individual and the nation. They sometimes think of Americans as citizens of a very young country who have not yet had time to build an enduring culture, and they contrast American youth with Asian age. It is important for Asians to learn that American culture goes beyond its short history, and is based on the cultures of the old world.

## CULTURAL INFORMATION

Where differences in cultures exist, there is a potentiality for cultural misunderstandings occurring between the peoples involved. In selecting the information for this section, an attempt has been made to focus on those facets of Asian culture touching upon the immediate life of the Asian ESL student--his school and his everyday world--that might cause problems for him or his teacher.

Certain generalizations about the Asian groups in the project--the Chinese, the Filipino, the Japanese, and the Korean--are presented here because of pedagogical considerations. However, it must be kept in mind that each student is an individual with his unique motivations and reactions, and should not be expected to fit automatically into a stereotype.

There are certain cultural realities shared by the Asians--the concepts of humility, of face (honor and dignity), of reverence for age, and of etiquette (good form). These feelings permeate all facets of their lives and project a strong influence over their actions and reactions.

### The Asian in the Classroom

Traditionally, education has been held in high esteem in Asian cultures. In the past education was considered a privilege reserved for the elite, but times have changed and mass public education is now available through the lower grades, with many continuing on into higher levels. Nevertheless, the traditional value given to education remains unchanged, and an educated person is revered as a "learned one." Asian parents have been known to make considerable sacrifices to provide for their children's education and training.

Student-teacher Relationship

1. The Asian student's attitude towards his teacher has always been one of great respect. His reluctance to ask questions in class, much less to speak out, may stem from his feelings of shyness or self-consciousness in the presence of his teacher. To leave himself open to making a mistake and "losing face" before his teacher is a frightening thought.
   a. A warm (not overwhelming) friendliness and sincerity can help put the student at ease.
   b. Give him experience in oral give-and-take in non-threatening types of situations.
   c. Build up his confidence by providing him with opportunities to succeed (e.g., by giving him utterances for repetition only).
   d. Initially ask him the type of questions that can be answered simply with a yes or a no.

2. The student-teacher relationship in Asian countries is quite formal, and classes are conducted in the traditional manner. Asians are basically formal in addressing each other, and this carries over into the classroom as well. The teacher is addressed as Teacher Nelson rather than as Mr./Ms. Nelson. In Japan, students are generally addressed by their last names (with an honorific title) rather than their first names, even in elementary schools. In China, the students are called by their full names.
   a. If the use of first names is the common practice in your classroom, explain the custom to your new Asian student.
   b. It may be wise not to insist on his calling you by your first name if he feels uncomfortable in doing so.

c. Explain to your students that to call one's teacher Teacher has a somewhat impolite connotation in the United States.

d. It may be necessary to remind Chinese and Thai students that Sir is strictly a masculine title in this country, as in their language the title teacher in Chinese (si saang) can be masculine or feminine.

Classroom Activities

1. Traditionally-educated Asian students equate the printed page with learning. They are thus visually-oriented and appear to need the reinforcement of reading and writing exercises.

   a. Help the student understand the importance of learning to communicate orally.

   b. At the same time help him understand that the logical way of learning to communicate in a language is to learn to hear (understand) and to speak it.

   c. Give the class a written handout or have them copy a lesson from the board after thorough oral practice.

2. The audio-lingual method of learning a language, with its mimicry and repetition features, can make an Asian student uncomfortable. Students in beginning classes where the emphasis is on oral practice may particularly feel that it is too childish an activity.

   a. Help the student understand the necessity of repeating words, phrases, and sentences in order to be able to say English sentences in an intelligible manner.

   b. Contextualize your drills and make even your substitution drills meaningful exercises so that the students are actually communicating.

c. Culminate each lesson with real communication, no matter how elementary an exchange.

3. The traditional classroom situation in Asia places the teacher at the front of the room, lecturing. When the teacher asks a question, he usually calls on a student to answer, rather than asking for a volunteer. As noted earlier, students seldom volunteer. An additional reason for this may be a reluctance on the student's part to appear as if he were "showing off."

   a. Teachers should try to explain that American education encourages active student participation.

   b. Help the students understand that volunteering answers is not an act of showing off, but a way of contributing to the progress of the whole class.

4. Competition is strong in Asian schools, and in Japanese schools for example, entry into select schools of higher learning depends upon very difficult examinations. Consequently, Asian students tend to be grade conscious. It is a difficult experience for good students to find themselves unable to function in a classroom situation, even though they realize it's because of their language handicap.

   a. Set up attainable goals for these students so they will feel successful.

   b. Encourage them to ask for help when they need it.

5. Topics for free conversation: Asians are reluctant to talk about unpleasant topics generally, but the Chinese are particularly sensitive about discussing death, illness, or accidents on happy occasions.

a. Be particularly careful to steer clear of unpleasant topics during the festival days of the Chinese New Year.

b. When a lesson on grammar involves vocabulary words such as to die, to be ill, to have an accident, make sure that all of this is done in the third person.

c. Exercise discretion in asking personal questions of students during drills. Most Asians tend to feel uncomfortable about discussing their personal lives.

d. Most Chinese and Koreans appear to have a candid attitude towards money matters. If an Asian asks the price of a house, car, suit, etc., an American should not feel offended. Their intent is purely impersonal - he merely wants the information as a guide to the handling of his own finances.

6. Filipinos have a tendency to use negative questions in their conversation. Questions like "Didn't you get a promotion?" or "Don't you have enough money?" may seem forward or offensive to Americans, but the Filipinos do not intend them to be so. They feel that it is easier for the respondent to answer, "No" to this type of question than it is to the more direct "Did you get a promotion?"

   a. Explain to your Filipino students the connotations of such negative questions, and make them aware of the possible effects on their listeners.

   b. Provide them with opportunities to use negative questions as they are used in English.

Interpersonal Communication

1. The Asians tend to be quite conscious of status and position. This, compounded by their extreme concern with good form, results in highly stylized ways of addressing one another. Other than with intimate acquaintances Asians call each other by their titles instead of by first names. Chinese and Filipinos go to the extent of addressing people by their office titles, like Manager Wang or Engineer de la Cruz, etc.

   Many of the Asian languages have special vocabulary and grammatical features for honorific usages as well. For example, in Mandarin Chinese there are two forms of the second person pronoun, as in Spanish. And the Japanese predilection for honorific usage is well-known.

   a. Inform the students that English does have degrees of politeness in certain usages, as in making requests.

   b. Another caution, particularly for Asian women who are married to English speakers and find themselves in a predominantly masculine environment: make them aware that certain types of speech are definitely masculine or feminine. This is particularly true in the use of exclamations, interjections, and the like.

2. The Asians, with their strong sense of humbleness, feel uncomfortable about accepting compliments. They tend to reject compliments, sincerely feeling unworthy. According to a Korean informant, even a graduate of a college of music would say, when praised for his accomplishments, "Oh, I don't have a good voice" or "I don't play very

well" or some such remark.

a. Give the Asians practice in accepting compliments naturally and gracefully.

b. By examples you can show them that a simple "Thank you" is by no means being boastful or showing off.

Seeking Employment

1. The feeling of humility that so many Asians possess works to their disadvantage in certain situations, particularly in seeking employment. When they are interviewed for jobs, they are often so humble that they seldom mention their past work experience, and they give too poor an assessment of their real abilities. According to a Chinese informant, a Chinese, upon being offered a position of responsibility, would first try to "prove" that he was unworthy and name several other people he considered better qualified for the job.

a. Convince the Asian student that it is a matter of survival to give a factual account of his work experience and abilities, and, in fact, prove that he is the best qualified for the job.

b. Give him practice in role-playing a job interview, to give him experience and build up confidence in himself.

Etiquette (Good Form)

1. Etiquette means different things in different cultures, and misunderstandings can come about because of this. For example, Asians have been taught to use both hands in handing an item to someone or receiving one. They therefore tend to interpret the Americans' casual way of handling this situation as being somewhat rude, while the Americans may feel that the Asians are ostentatiously polite.

2. As another example, the Chinese feel that an apologetic look is sufficient when they accidently bump someone or move in front of another person, while the Americans (and the Japanese, Koreans, and Filipinos as well) would say "Excuse me" or "Pardon me."

3. For some Asians (the Filipinos, for example), a verbal "Thank you" will suffice for the moment for a gift or a favor, with a reciprocal act to follow at an opportune time. The Americans, however, and the Japanese as well, will tend to follow up more quickly with a note, and the Japanese with a reciprocal gift.

   Lessons and discussions (for classes that can handle them) built around the different forms of etiquette can make for stimulating sessions and greater understanding.

4. Asians tend to say "No, thank you" or its equivalent in words or gestures when first offered food or drink, for example. Asian hosts and hostesses generally repeat their offers, anxious for their guests to accept. The Asians are bashful and reluctant to appear too greedy or childish by accepting food or drink the first or second time around.
   a. This type of concern for form may cause the more direct American to feel uncertain as to the true feelings of the Asians.
   b. Through role-playing of social situations, acquaint the students with American ways of social intercourse.

5. The Asians' attitudes of respect for others, coupled with their concern for form, often result in their being overly generous. They will generally insist on paying the check at a restaurant, and their gift-giving is often beyond their means. Furthermore, most Asians will not open a gift until after the donor has left. This is because

of mixed feelings--the recipient does not want to appear too eager to open his gift, like a child. Also, the giver has insisted that the gift was very poor and unworthy of giving, and the receiver does not want to embarrass him by opening it in front of him.

a. Reaching for a check is an act shared by all cultures, but the Asians seem to carry it to the extreme.

b. Inform the Asians that Americans may feel offended if the gift which they had carefully selected was not opened and admired.

On Eating

1. Asians, with their concern for good form, feel apprehensive about eating American food, American style, for their concept of American dining involves formal place settings with many pieces of silverware. To the Asian, who is accustomed to eating with just a pair of chopsticks (or a spoon, in the case of the Filipinos), the possibility of selecting the wrong piece of silverware is a frightening thought.

   a. Reassure the students that Americans are basically informal in their dining habits, and most of them would feel as insecure as the Asians in a formal dining situation.

   b. Place settings can be used as a lesson on vocabulary as well as on American customs.

2. What may be good form in one culture may be frowned upon in another. The Asian custom of loud sipping and smacking of lips may be offensive to the Americans, but the Asians are simply showing their enjoyment of the food. (Exceptions are the Japanese women and the Filipinos, who try to eat very unobtrusively.) On the other hand,

the Asians feel that the "finger licking" of Americans is very poor manners.

A lesson on comparative eating habits of the various cultures represented in the classroom could stimulate some interesting discussions.

Reverence for Age

1. The Asians' respect for age and their strong ancestral ties is reflected in their family, social, and business behavior patterns. They value maturity and tend to reject actions that might make them appear childish. Examples: see earlier notes on classroom audio-lingual activities and the accepting of refreshments or gifts.

2. Furthermore, this concept of age carries over into their concept of time. They are relatively slow in acting or reacting, in contrast with the Americans who act quickly. While the Americans value swift action, the Asians feel that time gives a person a chance to reflect and take thoughtful action.

   A mutual understanding of each other's attitude towards time should be helpful in counteracting antagonism. This requires patience from the teacher and an adjustment to a change of pace by the students.

Consumer Situations

1. Most Asians, with the exception of businessmen in large metropolitan areas, have been accustomed to paying cash for all their purchases. Some feel that to do otherwise would mean that the purchaser did not have enough money to buy the product. Because of this custom, many Asian students do not have established credit ratings.

a. Point out some of the advantages and disadvantages of using credit for making certain large purchases.

b. Warn the students against keeping or carrying around large amounts of cash.

c. Plan lesson units on buying items like major appliances and cars on the payment plan.

d. Plan lesson units on the necessity of careful investigation before signing contracts.

Oral Communication

1. Many Asians have the tendency to be noncommital in their responses even when asked direct questions. This may make them appear evasive in the eyes of the Americans. The Asians' concept of "face" applies not only to their own sense of honor and dignity, but extends to the "face" of others. They will go to great lengths to avoid offending or embarrassing others, and will beat around the bush until they are sure that they can come up with a response that would be received well.

   It would be helpful for the Asian students to learn that Americans in general are quite explicit in their communication and are somewhat non-plused by noncommital responses. Conversely, it would be helpful for Americans to know why the Asians seem so evasive--they just don't want to hurt anyone's feelings.

2. The often-mentioned attitude of respect for others carries over into linguistic features. In answering questions the Asians' concern is not so much for the answer to the question itself but rather for whether or not he can agree with the inquirer. This often results in utter linguistic chaos, particularly with negative questions

and tag-ending questions.

Examples:

a. American: We don't have any bananas, do we?

Asian: Yes, we have no bananas. (Meaning: Yes, you're right. We have no bananas.)

or

No, we have bananas. (Meaning: No, you're wrong. We have bananas.)

b. American: Didn't you bring your book today?

Asian: Yes, I didn't bring it today. (Meaning: Yes, you're right. I didn't bring it today.)

## SUPERSTITIONS

As in all cultures, superstitions handed down through generations play an important role in forming the attitudes and directing the actions of the Asians. The following examples of superstitions are described to prevent the problems teachers sometimes have because they are unaware of certain taboos.

### Numbers

Most cultures have superstitions about numbers, to a greater or lesser degree. The Japanese and Koreans put great significance on numbers.

Number four is called shi in Japanese, a word which also means death. So the Japanese studiously avoid any words that may contain the word shi in them. There is no room 420 in the new general ward at the Kyoto University Hospital, for example, for in shi-ni-rei, as it is read in Japanese, shi-ni means death and rei means spirit or soul.

In general, the Chinese prefer even numbers to odd numbers. Thus, they often give presents in pairs.

Filipinos avoid having their picture taken in a group of three because they believe that to do so would result in one of the trio dying or being involved in a serious accident.

Broken mirrors

The Japanese and Koreans share the Americans' dread of broken mirrors. To these Asians a broken mirror portends a divorce.

## SYMBOLISM

Colors

The color red, signifying good fortune, good luck, and posperity, is the favorite color of the Chinese. White, symbolic of death, of paleness, and of colorlessness, is disliked by the Chinese. On the other hand, the color white is favored by the Koreans, who associate the color with purity, cleanliness, and honesty.

Most Asians do not like black, and Filipino ladies in particular only wear black as an expression of mourning.

> Caution: Don't use white paper and ribbon in wrapping festive gifts for Chinese people.
>
> Wearing black dresses, as American women sometimes do, may cause the students to think that you are in mourning.

# APPENDIX

# AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY OF SOME PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS OF SAMOAN ESL STUDENTS

## WESTERN SAMOA AND AMERICAN SAMOA

Western Samoa and American Samoa lie in the South Pacific Ocean some 2,200 miles southwest of Hawaii.

Western Samoa is an independent nation comprised of the islands of Savai'i and Upoli, as well as two smaller islands. American Samoa is a protectorate of the United States, and consists of the islands of Tutuila and Manu'a.

The Polynesians came to the islands in migratory waves from Southwest Asia more than 2,000 years ago, and the Samoans are the second largest branch of the Polynesian race (after the Maoris of New Zealand).

This introductory account of some of the pronunciation problems encountered by Samoan ESL students in learning to speak English deals with sound segments only. It aims to identify some of the difficult English sounds for Samoans as well as the common substitution sounds.

Data for our study was derived from staff research of available literature, together with interviews with our informants, Mr. Mariota Tuiasosopo and Mrs. Masaniai Tuiasosopo. Mr. Tuiasosopo is from Vatia and Mrs. Tuiasosopo from Fagaita on the island of Tutuila. Mr. Tuiasosopo is a "tulafale," which means a talking chief or an orator, in English. A talking chief is a keeper and manipulator of Samoan lore. Both Mr. and Mrs. Tuiasosopo were school teachers before coming to mainland United States.

The Samoan language belongs to the Easter branch of the Malayo-Polynesian family. It was not a written language until missionaries came to the islands.

The Samoan writing system consists of the following alphabet: a, e, i, o, u, f, g, l, m, n, p, s, t, v, h, r, and k. The letters h, r, and k exist mainly for foreign loan words. The symbol ' stands for the glottal stop, and g is pronounced ŋ.

Phonetically, the sounds are:

Consonants

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| p | t | k | ' |
| f v | s | | h |
| m | n | ŋ | |
| | l r | | |

Vowels

| | |
|---|---|
| iy | uw |
| ɛ | ɔ |
| a | |

From the above, we can see that the following English consonantal sounds are missing in Samoan: b, d, g, θ, ð, z, š, dž, and tš. The vowels that do not have equivalents in Samoan are: I, ey, æ, ow, ʊ. These sounds are thus likely to produce learning problems for the Samoans as they learn to speak English.

The chart below shows the common substitutions for the above missing sounds:

| English | Samoan |
|---|---|
| /b/ | /p/ |
| /d/ | /t/ |
| /g/ | /ŋ, k/ |
| /θ/ | /t/ |
| /ð/ | /t/ |

| English | Samoan |
|---|---|
| /z/ | /s/ |
| /š/ | /s/ |
| /dž/ | /t, iy/ |
| /tš/ | /t/ |
| /ž/ | /s/ |
| /I/ | /i/ |
| /ey/ | /ɛ/ |
| /æ/ | /ɛ/ |
| /ow/ | /ɔ/ |
| /U/ | /uw/ |

The basic Samoan syllabic structure is (C) V . The common word has the form like: $( (C)\ V )^n$ where C=consonant V=vowel and $n \geq 1$ Therefore, we can see that English consonant clusters are new to Samoans, and they tend to drop the latter part of the consonant cluster. For instance, the English word February in Samoan is Fepuali. They drop the r in br.

From this common word structure pattern, we can also predict that English words ending in consonant(s) are difficult for the Samoan. They tend either to drop the final consonant or to add a vowel onto it. To illustrate the Samoan ESL students' common substitutions, we list some common loan words:

| English | Samoan |
|---|---|
| January | Ianuali |
| February | Fepuali |
| March | Mati |

| English | Samoan |
|---|---|
| April | Apelila |
| May | Me |
| June | Iuni |
| July | Iulai |
| August | Aokuso |
| September | Setema |
| October | Oketopa |
| November | Novema |
| December | Tesema |
| apple | 'apu |
| pen | peni |
| governor | kovana |
| Christian | Kerisiano |
| John | Ioane, Sione |
| angel | agelu (Note: the g in Samoan pronounced ʔ.) |
| paradise | parataiso (the native word is afio'aga) |
| China | Saina |
| elephant | elefane |
| Ruth | Ruta |

According to informants, Mr. and Mrs. Tuiasosopo, all the children in Samoa now take English in school. But conversational type of English programs are needed for the adult Samoans here in the States.

## THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE SAMOAN ALPHABET

| Samoan Alphabet | | Samoan Example |
|---|---|---|
| a | /a/ as in father | ato (basket) |
| e | /ɛ/ as in get | elephane (elephant) |
| i | /iy/ as in see | ipu (cup) |
| o | /ɔ/ as in for | ofu (dress) |
| u | /uw/ as in flute | uati (clock) |
| f | /f/ as in four | fagu (bottle) |
| g | /ŋ/ as in singer | gata (snake) |
| l | /l/ as in look | logo (bell) |
| m | /m/ as in me | moa (chicken) |
| n | /n/ as in no | nofoa (chair) |
| p | /p/ as in pipe | pusi (cat) |
| s | /s/ as in see | solofanua (horse) |
| t | /t/ as in tea | taavale (car) |
| v | /v/ as in vase | vaa (boat) |
| h | /h/ as in hey | Herota (Herod--personal name) |
| r | /r/ as in rise | Ruta (Ruth) |
| k | /k/ as in kiss | kirikiti (cricket) |
| ' | a glottal stop | |
| - | accent marker | |

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